

**DRAFT Equality statement for LGR proposal**

All of the East Sussex councils have responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 to ensure that, in the exercise of their functions, they have due regard to the need to:

- (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act.
- (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (as defined by the Act) and persons who do not share it.
- (c) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The protected characteristics set out in the Act are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/ maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership are also protected characteristics for the purposes of the duty to eliminate discrimination. When making decisions councils may also consider other matters such as the impact of rurality, deprivation, care experience, and being a carer, where relevant.

Any change in how public services are delivered will have the biggest impact on those most reliant on them, who are often among the most vulnerable people in society and include people sharing one or more of the legally protected characteristics.

If the proposal for the establishment of a single unitary council is accepted by Government, detailed implementation plans will be created. Equality impact assessments of these will set out both how the new council will continue to ensure it fulfils its legal requirements in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion, and will also include assessments of how each of the detailed plans are likely to impact people sharing different protected characteristics.

There are potential equality and inclusion benefits and challenges in relation to this proposal, but at this stage with so much uncertainty over funding, structures, process and practical implications, it is not possible to assess specific impacts with confidence, nor to define appropriate mitigating actions.

However, the councils are aware of the need to consider a range of issues, including (but not limited to) the following:

- Ensuring no disruption or delay in service delivery, especially for the most vulnerable, including during transition arrangements.

- Effective communication of transitions and any changes in services to people currently using services, especially where there are cognitive, sensory, language, digital or other barriers to understanding.
- Anticipating and addressing barriers and opportunities arising from changes to the ways services are delivered.
- Using assessment of equality impact throughout the transition and implementation processes.
- Identifying opportunities to tackle inequalities, including potential to shifting investment towards prevention and early intervention and connecting services currently delivered by different councils.
- Addressing practical challenges for service delivery across urban and rural areas, specifically considering physical and digital isolation.
- Working with the skills, experience and community links held by VCSE organisations across the county to support transition.
- Using equality data to inform planning, implementation and monitoring throughout the transition process and in the new authority.
- Ongoing consideration of patterns of deprivation across the county and ensuring appropriate interventions.
- Maintaining a focus on community cohesion across the county.
- Identifying impacts and opportunities inherent in any changes to political representation and how local people are engaged in decision-making.
- Ensuring ongoing compliance with equality legal duties through the transition and in the new authority.
- Monitoring staffing implications, including any changes to staffing structures, working policies and locations; providing ongoing communication about changes and impacts; and ensuring change processes are followed.